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USOSCE FOR CHRIS SIBILLA  
EUR FOR PDAS KURT VOLKER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/21/2017

TAGS: PREL PHUM PTER OSCE RS SP

SUBJECT: SPAIN EQUIVOCAL ON RCFS REGISTRATION, BUT MAY DO  
NOTHING

REF: STATE 132369

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b)  
and (d)

¶1. (C) Charge spoke September 20 with Jose Maria Pons, Director General for North America and Europe, about the need for Spain as Chair-in-Office (CiO) to allow the registration of the Russian Chechen Friendship Society (RCFS) for the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM). Charge expressed USG's strong concern at the precedent set by the failure to register RCFS for the September 13-14 Victims of Terrorism meeting. He emphasized that the RCFS is a reputable and internationally recognized human rights organization that has been under continuous pressure from the Russian Federation, and he noted that the closure of RCFS was more likely due to its illumination of human rights violations in Chechnya than any tenuous allegations of association with terrorism. Charge underscored the USG takes terrorism as or more seriously than any nation in the world and would not be arguing for their inclusion if we thought the RCFS had anything to do with terrorism. Charge referenced President Zapatero's championing of human rights in his foreign policy and noted that such an action would send a very negative message to the world and reflect poorly on Spain as a human rights defender.

¶2. (C) Pons replied that he understood and respected the USG position perfectly and Spain agreed that there is no link between the RCFS and terrorism. However, he said that Spain, as the CiO, must respect the institutional sovereignty of each member state. As such, the fact that a sovereign state's highest judicial body has declared an organization illegitimate must be taken into account and respected by the Chair-in-Office. From an institutional perspective, the CiO must take such considerations very seriously.

¶3. (C) Pons lamented that Spain was being placed in a very difficult position and was under great pressure from the U.S. a key friend and ally, some of its EU partners, and Russia. Pons said Spain would carefully weigh all of the arguments and make a final decision. Pons acknowledged that the Zapatero government has made human rights one of its foreign policy pillars.

¶4. (C) Pons concluded by noting that the RCFS had already registered for the HDIM, so that removing it would require a "formal action" by the CiO to reverse the registration, which he indicated was a different circumstance than for the Victims of Terrorism meeting, and possibly more difficult.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: Charge took Pons' final comment as a slight hint that the CiO might be considering this minor technical

point as a means to allow the RCFS to remain registered for the HDIM. Pons did not mention the upcoming trip by President Zapatero to Sochi, which no doubt is factoring in Spanish considerations in the other direction.

LLORENS